

The Cheerful Letter

EVERY PLACE A CHURCH; EVERY DAY THE LORD'S DAY; ALL EVENTS BLESSINGS; ALL JOY
THANKSGIVING; AND ALL NATURE AND LIFE FULL OF GOD.—*James Freeman Clarke.*

VOL. I.

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No. 5.

THE CHEERFUL LETTER.

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THE ETERNAL GOODNESS.

O friends! with whom my feet have trod
The quiet aisles of prayer,
Glad witness to your zeal for God
And love of man I bear.

I trace your lines of argument;
Your logic linked and strong
I weigh as one who dreads dissent,
And fears a doubt as wrong.

But still my human hands are weak
To hold your iron creeds;
Against the words you bid me speak
My heart within me pleads.

Who fathoms the Eternal Thought?
Who talks of scheme and plan?
The Lord is God! He needeth not
The poor device of man.

I walk with bare, hushed feet the ground
Ye tread with boldness shod;
I dare not fix with mete and bound
The love and power of God.

Ye praise his justice, even such
His pitying love I deem;
Ye seek a king; I fain would touch
The robe that hath no seam.

Ye see the curse that overbroods
A world of pain and loss;
I hear our Lord's beatitudes
And prayer upon the cross.

More than your schoolmen teach, within
Myself, alas! I know;
Too dark ye cannot paint the sin,
Too small the merit show.

I bow my forehead to the dust,
I veil mine eyes for shame,
And urge, in trembling self-distrust,
A prayer without a claim.

I see the wrong that round me lies,
I feel the guilt within;
I hear, with groan and travail-cries,
The world confess its sin.

Yet, in the maddening maze of things,
And tossed by storm and flood,
To one fixed stake my spirit clings;
I know that God is good!

Not mine to look where cherubim
And seraphs may not see,
But nothing can be good in him
Which evil is in me.

The wrong that pains my soul below
I dare not throne above;
I know not of his hate,—I know
His goodness and his love.

I dimly guess from blessings known
Of greater out of sight,
And, with the chastened Psalmist, own
His judgments, too, are right.

I long for household voices gone,
For vanished smiles I long,
But God hath led my dear ones on,
And he can do no wrong.

I know not what the future hath
Of marvel or surprise,
Assured alone that life and death
His mercy underlies.

And, if my heart and flesh are weak
To bear an untried pain,
The bruised reed he will not break,
But strengthen and sustain.

No offering of my own I have,
Nor works my faith to prove;
I can but give the gifts he gave,
And plead his love for love.

And so beside the Silent Sea
 I wait the muffled oar;
 No harm from him can come to me
 On ocean or on shore.

I know not where his islands lift
 Their fronded palms in air;
 I only know I cannot drift
 Beyond his love and care.

O brothers! if my faith is vain,
 If hopes like these betray,
 Pray for me that my feet may gain
 The surer, safer way.

And thou, O God! by whom are seen
 Thy creatures as they be,
 Forgive me if too close I lean
 My human heart on thee!

—*John G. Whittier.*

Turn thus into life—life real and true, the life of the spirit—all that is within you and which you can appropriate. Do the good you know. Follow the truth you see. Not words, not admiration, not inaction. but appropriation, transformation into life,—this is the first great lesson of the key to life and fruit.

And the process for us must begin here, where God has placed us. We are seeds cast into the soil, but by a Divine Sower. Here, under all the conditions of life, just as they are now, while it is the spring and seed-time, and we have the light of life, and the spirit of God is poured out like the water from the skies.

How the possibilities of our lives open to us, under this conception! How the very drudgery of existence takes to itself a nobleness, and becomes fraught with an eternal significance! Dust and ashes in itself as life often seems, and much of it really is, it can all be transmuted into the imperishable and eternal,—go to fruit that shall be gathered into the heavenly garner. Duty performed is a gain in character whose force can never be wholly spent. A sacrifice for righteousness means a larger appropriation of righteousness. Love, freely given, even to the thankless or to an enemy, becomes a larger power of loving. Patience in sickness, endurance in helplessness, fortitude in trial, strengthen the stalk that bears the fruit; and the very fineness of the grain is from the vigor of the climate in which it ripens. For this is the divine

power of life, that it can turn its environment into growth and fruitage, and make, even of the life we hate for its meagreness and perishableness, for its uncongeniality and its chill, a good that abides, and is kept unto life eternal.

Our life begins here a single seed,—a tiny seed it may be. But if it takes to itself what in the divine ordering is provided for it, if it transforms what is given to it of God into its own life, it does not abide alone. It is transplanted to the other world not as it here began. Its powers, its capacities, its acquisitions and joys, are already reduplicated beyond computation, and they go on to multiplied and incalculable harvest. There is indeed no conceivable limit to the riches of a soul that has once resolved, with a resolution that cannot be shaken, to be true to itself,—that has really begun to live as God would have it, as Christ came to teach us how to live.—*Egbert C. Smyth.*

What we seek is the immortality which is clothed with disinterestedness rather than with wings. We look for a heaven where there will be more disinterested love, more patience with weakness, more hospitality to truth. If such is to be realized, we ourselves must begin to shape it now. By working in and for the life that now is, we lay hold of the life that never ceases to be. We expect the continued life because we have more work on hand than we can finish in this. . . . The universal providence that includes bird and flower is the providence that is to have continuous use for the soul of man. The simplest movement of grass and flowers through the sod reaches the throne of the Eternal. The lowliest blade has its message, and rings its Easter bell in April. There is a prophetic instinct in the soul that carries on the lines of thought suggested by our knowledge of the near beauty and the lowly marvel. We build large hopes upon the great and beautiful laws of the universe. We place generous confidence in the Master Builder who so grandly forms the growing order. We cannot believe that he will allow our lives to remain segments of an incomplete circle. There is some vast meaning in this mystic tide that has arisen in the soul of man in all times.—*J. L. Jones.*

THE STILL HOUR.

"UNDERNEATH ARE THE EVERLASTING ARMS."

When on my day of life the night is falling,
And in the winds from unsunned spaces blown,
I hear far voices out of darkness calling

My feet to paths unknown;

Thou who hast made my home of life so pleasant,
Leave not its tenant when its walls decay;

O Love divine, O Helper ever present,
Be thou my strength and stay!

Be near me when all else from me is drifting,—
Earth, sky, home pictures, days of shade and shine,

And kindly faces to my own uplifting
The love which answers mine.

I have but thee, my Father; let thy spirit
Be with me then to comfort and uphold;
No gate of pearl, no branch of palm, I merit,
Nor street of shining gold.

Suffice it if—my good and ill unreckoned,
And both forgiven through thy abounding grace—

I find myself by hands familiar beckoned
Unto my fitting place.

Some humble door among thy many mansions,
Some sheltering shade where sin and striving cease,

And flows forever, through heaven's green expansions,
The river of thy peace.

There from the music, round about me stealing,
I fain would learn the new and holy song,
And find at last, beneath thy trees of healing,
The life for which I long.

—John G. Whittier.

The poet used also to be called a priest; and the true poet is a priest after the order of Melchizedek, for he shows us God in the world. He teaches us to see divine beauty in all of nature. Nature is not merely a house and farm for us to live in, not merely a picture gallery for us to amuse ourselves in, not merely a museum of curiosity for us to study; but the poet, if he be a true, divinely inspired poet, shows us our Father in everything. To him nature is full of the peace of God. He shows us in the dawn of morning the smile of God, welcoming his children to their daily work; in the gorgeous sunset he shows us God drawing the curtains of the evening; in the solemn fires of night, circling along their interminable paths for-

ever, he shows us the majestic stability of God's great order. In the infinite varieties of plant, flower, tree, insect, bird, he shows the Divine Providence caring for all his creatures, painting the lily of the field, and marking the fall of the sparrow. And so the poet, or the lover of nature, becomes also a priest; and his every verse is a hymn and sacramental psalm. Such a priest was Wordsworth, sanctifying the thoughts of men wherever the English language is spoken. Such a priest is Whittier, filling nature and life with a sense of God's presence. These are the priests forever after the order of Melchizedek.

So we may find our true priests everywhere, and we may ourselves all be true priests of God. If we have in us the spirit of Christ; if we see God as our Father and as the Father of all men; if in this spirit we learn to respect and honor all God's children; if we carry in our hearts, wherever we go, an unfailing trust that God is around us, and that he is always ready to come into our hearts by the holy influence of his Spirit,—we shall find a priesthood in nature, in events, in life; and we shall carry that holy and sanctifying influence to others.

Every humble soul that sees the Father, and lives in that sweet vision, becomes a priest to other souls. A sacramental power goes from the voice, the touch, the look, of one who himself loves God. I call it a sacramental occasion when any soul full of the love of God and man strives to help another soul,—to purify, to elevate it, to bring it to God. Something beyond the meaning of the words passes from heart to heart. Something more convincing than argument, more weighty than reason, makes of that hour a sacramental hour, and of that office a priesthood. The life of God flows to us through such channels. Deeper than all depth, higher than all height, the spirit comes through these human hearts to ours. When children see their parents living lives of purity, devotion, fidelity, truth, justice, honor, tenderness, what priesthood can so lift their young hearts to God as this? Therefore, the father was of old the priest, and the king, as head of the tribe, was also its priest, traces of which customs linger through all historic records.—James Freeman Clarke.

THE BIBLE CLASS.

The three books on the "Genuineness of the Gospels" recommended in the September number were Norton's "Genuineness of the Gospels," Furness's "Unconscious Truth of the Four Gospels," Huidekoper's "Indirect Testimony of History to the Genuineness of the Gospels." Any other book chosen by a student may be used in place of these; and a student's own argument may be given, when preferred. Please send papers containing abstract of the argument to Miss L. Freeman Clarke, Jamaica Plain, Mass.: if possible, by the end of October.

We gave notice that this subject would probably be continued two months, and, instead of questions on a new subject, will this month give some referring to the general subject already mentioned, which will suggest what points to emphasize.

Norton's book requires close study; but those who have it will find it worth the time and thought required.

PART I.

1. What does Norton say of the essential agreement of the four Gospels? (Chapter I.)

2. What reasons does he give for thinking that the Gospels were guarded from corruption and interpolation? (Chapter II.)

(Brief answers of only two or three lines are best.)

PART II.

3. The evidence from the general reception of the Gospels among the early Christians? (Chapter I.)

4. What evidence do we derive from the writings of Justin Martyr? (Chapter II.)

5. What is said of the Gospels of Luke and John in Chapter III.?

6. Objections considered and answered in Chapter IV.?

Part III. of Norton's book treats of the Gnostics and Ebionites, and of the evidence for the genuineness of the Gospels afforded by early heresies. This is interesting and valuable, and may be studied with advantage by those who are able to give the time it demands; but it is not required of those members of the class who have chosen Norton's book. The first two parts are all that is necessary.

QUESTIONS ON PROF. HUIDEKOPER'S BOOK.

1. What did the controversial wants of the early Christians necessitate?

2. What were the important points of the discussion between Jewish and Gentile Christians?

3. Between Jews and Christians?

4. Between heathen and Christians? Concerning God? Concerning Jesus? Concerning heathen deities? Idolatry? The antiquity of Christianity and heathenism? Public calamities? The creation of man?

5. What was the important fundamental distinction between the idea of God as held by heathen nations and that held by Jews and Christians?

6. One or two points of the discussion with the Gnostics?

OPINIONS OF EARLY CHRISTIANS.

1. What did they believe about heathen deities?

2. Idolatry?

3. Christ's mission to the underworld?

4. The resurrection of the flesh?

5. The millennium?

6. Restoration of Jerusalem?

7. Destruction of Rome?

8. Antichrist? (Beliar.)

9. Nero's return?

10. God devoid of name?

CUSTOMS OF EARLY CHRISTIANS.

1. The Sabbath and Sunday?

2. Eating of blood?

3. Baptism.

4. The Lord's Supper?

5. What were some of the names used for God by early Christians in their arguments with the heathen?

6. Why were these names necessary?

Give any points that interest you in Chapters VIII. and IX.

Read the summary of the argument in Chapter X. Then give it from memory, in your own words.

In Dr. Furness's book the argument is not suited for a list of categorical questions, but is of the deepest interest. The student is advised, after reading it carefully, to make a brief abstract, in his or her own language.

The books recommended for this lesson may usually be borrowed from public libra-

ries and church libraries. Some copies are kept for lending by the Post-office Mission of the Church of the Disciples. Address Church of the Disciples, corner of West Brookline Street and Warren Avenue, Boston, Mass., P. O. Mission.

Send answers to questions to Miss L. Freeman Clarke, Jamaica Plain, Mass.

We have received from one of our students the following paper on the "Apocryphal Gospels," and take pleasure in inserting it here, hoping that others will be encouraged to write also:—

There is a great mass of apocryphal writings, some of which are entire, while of others only fragments or merely the names are known. One writer says: "There are forty-one apocryphal or pseudepigraphal books now in existence, the general Epistle of Barnabas, the First Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians, etc. In addition to these forty-one we have another list of sixty-eight not now extant, but mentioned by writers of the first four centuries after Christ as existing at that time." Another author divides them into: 1. Gospels, of which about fifty are known to us. In most of them the author concealed his own name, and inscribed his book with the name of some apostle or disciple, in order to give it authority, as the Gospel of James, or Protevangelium, the Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew, the Gospel of the Nativity of Mary, etc. As a rule, the apocryphal Gospels give details regarding those periods of our Lord's life about which the New Testament is silent. 2. Acts, which include the Acts of Peter and Paul, Acts of Barnabas, Acts of Philip, Acts of Andrew, Acts of Thomas, Acts of Thaddeus, and some six or eight more. 3. Epistles, which contain the letter of Abgar to Jesus, the Epistle of Mary to Ignatius, the Epistle of Paul to the Laodiceans, and seven others. 4. Revelations, The apocalypse of Moses, of Esdras, of Paul, of John (three), of the assumption of Mary.

Some say there were never more than ten or twelve distinct works, others being different recensions of the same narrative or different titles of the same work.

They are totally diverse from the genuine Gospels in conception, in spirit, in execution, in their whole impression,—in all respects so entirely unlike, so immeasurably

inferior, that the New Testament only shines the brighter by the contrast. As one writer puts it, "they have scarcely so much resemblance to the genuine Gospels as the monkey has to man." (Probably he was not an ardent advocate of Darwinism.)

Instead of simplicity, we have bombast; instead of strong good sense, silliness; instead of purity, filthiness; instead of manliness, puerility; instead of dignity, meanness; instead of self-forgetfulness, self-exaltation; instead of generosity, spitefulness; instead of elevated, sublime sentiment, poor, degrading nonsense. Indeed, while the genuine Gospels are fully equal to and even above the delicacy and true refinement and intellectual and moral elevation of the most cultivated nations and ages, the apocryphal generally fall below the lowest, and could scarcely find anywhere a public mean enough to receive and relish them except in the dark corners of the declining Roman Empire where they first originated.

CHAS. A. WHITNEY.

Upton, Mass.

THE MOTHERS' COUNCIL.

LETTER FROM A FRIEND.

In the extract quoted from "H. H." are these words: "Let a child see that his mother is so anxious that he should have the approbation and good will of her friends that she will," etc. With all her loving wisdom, is not this an error?

How often we hear a child checked by calling its attention to the approval or opinion of others! What is the effect? First, it teaches the child to care most of all to win it, and to value it more than "the clear voice within its heart." It learns to ask itself, "What will people say?" rather than "What will mother say?" or "What does my own heart say is right or true?" Secondly, it cultivates that bane of one's existence, self-consciousness and vanity.

I believe that a child must at first live by its parents' standard, regardless of what others think, and that that should be all-sufficient. But it can be taught at an early age to listen to its own conscience, the spirit within which is never wholly absent from any human soul.

Say to a child, "What will Mrs. Long think of you if she sees you doing so?" and

instantly the child looks upon Mrs. Long as a superior person, who is never naughty. By and by that child sees Mrs. Long do something which it instinctively calls "mean." It promptly reasons thus: "Then I don't care what she thinks of me, if she is like that! Perhaps what I did was not so very bad, after all." At once the image set up for imitation is shattered, the standard is lowered, and the child is left doubting what is very wrong or very right. This is no imaginary case. Let there be but one standard to appeal to; and let there be taught that love of God's law which can be true, though the heavens fall. Say to each young soul:—

"Stand up! Be thou erect and free!
Care not what others' paths may be:
See only that thou faithful art
To the clear voice within thy heart!"

FROM A MOTHER IN THE FAR WEST.

My baby, nine months old, has, according to *Babyhood*, never eaten anything solid yet. She is a perfect wonder of a baby, *never cries*. Indeed, I never had one that did cry, which I attribute to their never wearing bands; never being trotted or tossed about, when small; never given medicine for the wind they swallow during these same tossings; feed on *milk alone* the first year. They are fed regularly every three hours, and sleep between times almost all the time. Never being able to *hold*, otherwise *carry* and spoil mine, on account of my frail strength, they early learn to amuse themselves, and are as happy and contented as a child can be, crowing and laughing all the time they are awake. None of my little ones waken during the whole night.

You spoke of the eldest sister helping. Ah! how I wish you could see her. She can, and has, every morning since April, '91, washed the breakfast dishes (a six o'clock meal with us, winter and summer), and has never broken one article of our scanty table service. (This "eldest sister" of a family of four is now five years old.) They all carry wood to the wood-box. She (the eldest) often goes to the "sp'ing" for water, three hundred yards away, alone. F. and M., aged five and four now, take turns in watching and amusing the baby, who is placed securely in a big, old-fashioned cradle (we call it "The Ark") with playthings, and in guarding O. (the boy eighteen months old) from danger. F.

has her lesson every morning. She can read, print, and write fairly, spell a little, knows considerable history told as stories. She knows all the principal countries of the world, all the oceans, all foreign capitals, all the States in the United States and each capital, all the counties in *this State* by name and shape and size, imports and exports of each country. I got a map of the United States (an advertising card), and carefully cut it up like a dissected map for her last Christmas, and she has learned all the States, etc., long since, having a very good memory. The counties of this State were learned by sewing bits of bright cloth together, crazy-quilt style, except that I *cut* and *basted* each piece to form a county, the whole cushion size.

I wonder what you would say to see them playing! Just now they have white cloths bound across their brows. M. has the "Ark" turned upside down, rockers on top, and sits on a pillow—between what, do you think? Why, between the humps of her camel, to be sure. And they are a caravan crossing Sahara. Tin tomato-cans strung on a string about their necks are vessels for water. Bits of wood tied to F.'s bare feet are sandals. She studies the minutest details of foreign dress in the pictures for this purpose.

Now, five minutes later, F. and O. have the cloths tied in bunches on their backs. The cradle has a stick stuck in each corner, and the towel for a canopy overhead. M. lies under this, and is—oh, you would never guess what! Stanley, exploring Africa. F. standing at the foot, O. at the head, tramp up and down continually: they are native bearers, carrying Stanley. When tired, they camp. F. puts the towel over two chairs, and M. and O. *tent*, while she puts on her papa's rubber boots and his south-wester, a double-visored hat, something like Stanley pictures; goes stumbling among the chairs; sees a tiger (our cat); shoots an elephant (our big black dog); comes back, makes a fire, roasts yams, eats bananas and other fruit. The Arab party often stop and eat dates.

While I was busy kneading bread this morning, F. kept up a fire. The stove was an engine, she fireman. O. sat in the baby's high chair, turning the screw to the table: he was a brakeman, the cradle containing the

other two passengers. (N.B.—The *brake-man* is eighteen months old.) I help F. somewhat by descriptions, but she has a very fair idea of the dress and customs of most nations already. That is our geography.

FROM A GRANDMOTHER IN WISCONSIN.

My dear Friends of "The Cheerful Letter": To-day I received the August number of *The Cheerful Letter*, and I feel doubly indebted to you all who are trying to send so much good cheer to those less favored; also, the poor invalid and cripple in the far-away Wisconsin State. Words fail to express half I desire you to know of how much I do thoroughly appreciate your kindness. If you will kindly tell me in what place I may be made useful to those dear *mothers* and *children*, your invalid grandmother, with her feeble hands, will give you all she can do with a cheerful heart. I seek to do good and to get good. I try not to be ministered unto only, but to minister; to love the King's Daughters, the mothers, and dear little grandchildren. I wear the little silver cross that was given me by the president of one of the circles in this city when they made me an honorary member. One other invalid lady here has been made an honorary member of the King's Daughters' Circle at our church; and we are both members of the *Shut-in Society*, and wearing the little silver cross, and daily bearing the cross of Christ in the world, that we may by and by change the cross for the crown, and enter into that rest that is prepared for those who wait patiently here. There, in the home where there will not be any sick-room to be found in all the "many mansions," there will be no need of crutches or wheel-chairs: we shall run and not be weary, walk and not faint; while we lean on an arm stronger than flesh and more than human. Now, dear mothers, toil on a little while longer: soon the race will be run in the path that now seems so uneven; and then the welcome message will come to you: "Child, thy Father calls thee home." "Enter thou into the rest that is prepared for the faithful child of God." Oh, how sweet the word "rest" sounds to a weary one! I will meet you all in the prayer-room at the twilight hour; and, if I am welcome this time, I will tell you at our next meeting of my first visit with one of the *Shut-in Society*.

Kindest sympathy from your loving

GRANDMOTHER IN WISCONSIN.

BETTER THAN GOLD.

Just a single bright smile to some one in distress,

A kind word to some ragged boy,—

These will often go farther than money to bless

And fill a sad heart with joy.

Just a bunch of fresh flowers for an invalid's room,

A line to a dear absent friend,—

These will often do more to dispel pain and gloom

Than all of the gold you can spend.

—A *Shut-in Invalid King's Daughter*.

THE BOOK AND MAGAZINE CLUB.

Dear Friends,—Do any of you take the *Mothers' Nursery Guide*, formerly called *Babyhood*? Any one who is willing to send it monthly, after reading, to a mother who is not able to take it, will do a great deal of good. Answer to *The Cheerful Letter Book Club*, care of Miss Bertha Langmaid, 2 Gordon Terrace, Brookline, Mass.

GENERAL INFORMATION FOR LENDERS AND BORROWERS.

1. If you see a book offered in the Book Club which you desire to borrow, write directly to the address of the person who offers it. If she receives more than one request, the addresses of those to whom she cannot respond may be sent to the Book Club, and the request printed there.

2. If you have a book or paper to give or lend, write directly to the Book Club as above, and offer it with your address. By this means we receive requests from several members of *The Cheerful Letter Exchange*.

3. In sending a book, enclose, when possible, a P. O. card for response, already addressed.

4. In thanking the person who has sent you a book, always mention the name of the book. Say, "I have received 'In His Name,'" etc., not "I have received *that book*." This saves a busy person a good deal of time. Otherwise, she must consult her list constantly, to find out what book has been received safely.

Any one who can send copies of the *Century*, the *Atlantic*, *Harper's Magazine*, *New England Magazine*, *Babyhood* (*Mother's Nursery Guide*), *Babyland*, the *Pansy*, *St. Nicholas*

Harper's Young People, *Wide Awake*, the *Christian Register*, *Christian Union*, or any good weekly or monthly periodical, will confer a favor by addressing the Book Club as above.

Several copies of *Every Other Sunday* (Unitarian Sunday-school paper) have been offered to our Book Club. Will any one who desires to receive this paper regularly, as it is issued, write directly to our secretary, Miss Bertha Langmaid, 2 Gordon Terrace, Brookline, Mass?

If you will send me the address of any person or persons who would like copies of the *Woman's Journal*, I would willingly supply them. I have some old *Atlantic Monthlies*, possibly other reading matter. Address Anna H. Burrill, Concord, Mass.

I shall be glad to send the *Christian Register* and one copy of *The Cheerful Letter*, after reading, to any one who would like them. Lucy F. Young, Groton, Mass.

I take the *Mayflower*, and would like to send it to any one who loves the culture of flowers. F. H. Curtis, 445 Centre Street, Jamaica Plain, Mass.

Please give me the address of some one who would like to receive the *Christian Register* (weekly), also the *Nation*. Write to (Miss) Louise Dresel, Beverly, Mass.

OLYMPIA, WASHINGTON.

Kind Friends,—I am a long way from any library. Am very fond of reading, but am not able to buy any reading matter. Would be delighted to have *Babyhood*, *Babyland*, the *Pansy*, *Popular Educator*, *Housekeeper* (*Housekeeper's Weekly*?), book "Stepping Heavenward," "In His Name," "The Chaplet of Pearls," "The Heir of Redclyffe," "Heartsease." I will read carefully, and send the same to others. I am confined to my home, owing to ill health and having little children to attend. Respectfully,

MRS. N. E. OADES.

Can I interest you in our Seaconnet Light-house? The men there have no reading matter; and, if you will put it in the proper hands, I will be greatly obliged. Address it to the Light-house, and it will reach them.—A. E. H. S., Little Compton, R.I.

Thanks for *The Cheerful Letter*. It is the first I have seen. I like it much, and hope to see more. I was glad to see scrap-books mentioned. I have made quite a good number for the shut-ins, and now have good stories, poetry, and pictures that I can send to any one who would like them. My magazines and papers I send to the shut-in family, which I find is very large. I would like to contribute to your paper, but cannot just now. My doctor has forbidden my writing, as it affects my heart badly. What reading you like to send I will pass it along the highway of help. Yours in friendship, Mrs. O. B. Butler, Farmington, Maine.

I would like to obtain Jacob Abbott's "Gentle Measures in Training the Young." I have sent my name to Miss Langmaid, sure of "an especially cordial welcome," as I am all that constitutes a member of *The Cheerful Letter Exchange*. The greater part of the last three years I have had an intimate acquaintance with pain. Am a young mother (but twenty-five), have four little ones, the eldest five years, the youngest nine months old. Am ten miles from a church or library; am alone with the little ones for weeks, far from neighbors, with this vast fir forest encompassing me like some great wall, and loneliness oppressing me like a pall. Mrs. Mabel H. Taylor, New Kamilchie, Wash.

A copy of your little paper has been sent me by some kind friend, and I would be very glad indeed to receive some of the reading matter so kindly offered through its columns. Living on a ranch seven miles from town, I often know what it is to be absolutely without anything to read. I should like to have "Little Lord Fauntleroy," "Robert Elsmere," any of E. P. Roe's or C. M. Yonge's works that could be spared me. I will return them if desired, or will "pass them on." Hoping that I am not asking too much, I am very truly, Mrs. C. Murray, Waterloo, Neb.

I write to ask whether some one who receives either the *Century* or *Harper's Monthly* would kindly send it to me after reading. I would be glad, too, to receive old papers or magazines. Farmers' families living on the Nebraska prairies need reading to pass away the time, especially during the long, dreary winter.—Mrs. C. Reeve, Valley, Neb.

GENTLE MEASURES IN TRAINING
THE YOUNG.

BY JACOB ABBOTT.

"Or the principles on which a firm parental authority may be established and maintained without violence or anger; and the right development of the moral and mental capacities be promoted by methods in harmony with the structure and the characteristic of the juvenile mind."

(We give here some extracts from a book which is so wise, practical, and helpful that we wish we could give the book itself to every young mother who belongs to our *Cheerful Letter Exchange*. Perhaps those who own it will feel disposed to lend it through our Book Club. There could not be a better book for a Lending Library.)

It is not impossible that in the minds of some persons the idea of employing gentle measures in the management and training of children may seem to imply the abandonment of the principle of authority as the basis of the parental government, and the substitution of some weak and inefficient system of artifice and manœuvring in its place. To suppose that the object of this work is to aid in effecting such a substitution is entirely to mistake its nature and design. The only government of the parent over the child that is worthy of the name is one of authority,—complete, absolute, unquestioned authority. The object of this work is, accordingly, not to show how the gentle methods which will be brought to view can be employed as a substitute for such authority, but how they can be made to aid in establishing and maintaining it.

The first duty which devolves upon the mother in the training of her child is the establishment of her authority over him; that is, the forming in him of the habit of immediate, implicit, unquestioning obedience to all her commands. And the first step to be taken, or rather, perhaps, the first essential condition required for the performance of this duty, is the fixing of the conviction in her own mind that it is a duty.

"I wish my child to be governed by reason and reflection," says one. "I wish him to see the necessity and propriety of what I require of him, so that he may render a ready and willing compliance with my wishes instead of being obliged blindly to submit to arbitrary and despotic power."

She forgets that the faculties of reason and reflection and the power of appreciating

the necessity and propriety of things, and of bringing considerations of future remote and perhaps contingent good and evil to restrain and subdue the impetuosity of appetites and passions eager for present pleasure, are qualities that appear late and are very slowly developed in the infantile mind; that no real reliance can be placed upon them in the early years of life; and that, moreover, one of the chief and expressly intended objects of the establishment of the parental relation is to provide in the mature reason and reflection of the father and mother the means of guidance which the embryo reason and reflection of the child could not afford during the period of his immaturity.

To aid in the development and cultivation of the thinking and reasoning powers is doubtless a very important part of a parent's duty. But to cultivate these faculties is one thing, while to make any control which may be procured for them over the mind of the child the basis of government is another. To explain the reasons for our commands is excellent, if it is done in the right time and manner. The wrong time is when the question of obedience is pending, and the wrong manner is when they are offered as inducements to obey. We may offer reasons for *recommendations*, when we leave the child to judge of their force, and to act according to our recommendations or not, as his judgment shall dictate. But reasons should never be given as inducements to obey a command.

Let no reader fall into the error of supposing that the mother's making her authority the basis of her government renders it necessary for her to assume a stern and severe aspect toward her children, in her intercourse with them; or to issue her commands in a harsh, abrupt, and imperious manner; or always to refrain from explaining, at the time, the reasons for a command or a prohibition. The more gentle the manner, and the more kind and courteous the tones in which the mother's wishes are expressed, the better, provided only that the wishes, however expressed, are really the mandates of an authority which is to be yielded to at once without question or delay. She may say: "Mary, will you please to leave your doll, and take this letter for me into the library to your father?" or "Johnny, in five minutes it will be time for you to

put your blocks away to go to bed. I will tell you when the time is out"; or "James, look at the clock," to call attention to the fact that the time is arrived for him to go to school.

Another large class of mothers are deterred from making any efficient effort to establish their authority over their children for fear of thereby alienating their affections. "I wish my child to love me," says a mother of this class. "That is the supreme and never-ceasing wish of my heart; and, if I am continually thwarting her and constraining her by my authority, she will soon learn to consider me an obstacle to her happiness, and I shall become an object of her aversion and dislike."

There is some truth, no doubt, in this statement thus expressed; but it is not applicable to this case, for the reason that there is no need whatever for a mother's "continually thwarting and constraining" her children in her efforts to establish her authority over them. The love which they will feel for her will depend in a great measure upon the degree in which she sympathizes and takes part with them in their occupations, their enjoyments, their disappointments, and their sorrows, and in which she indulges their child-like desires. The love, however, awakened by these means will be not weakened or endangered, but immensely strengthened and confirmed by the exercise on her part of a just and equable but firm and absolute authority. This must always be true so long as a feeling of respect for the object of affection tends to strengthen, and not to weaken, the sentiment of love. The mother who does not govern her children is bringing them up, not to love her, but to despise her.

If, besides being their playmate, their companion and friend, indulgent in respect to all their harmless fancies, and patient and forbearing with their childish faults and foolishness, she also exercises, in cases requiring it, an authority over them which, though just and gentle, is yet absolute and supreme, she rises to a very exalted position in their view. Their affection for her has infused into it an element which greatly aggrandizes and ennobles it,—an element somewhat analogous to that sentiment of lofty devotion which a loyal subject feels for his queen.

On the other hand, if she is inconsiderate

enough to attempt to win a place in her children's hearts by the sacrifice of her maternal authority, she will never succeed in securing a place there that is worth possessing. The children will all, girls and boys alike, see and understand her weakness; and they will soon learn to look down upon her instead of looking up to her, as they ought. As they grow older, they will become more and more unmanageable. The insubordination of the girls must generally be endured; but that of the boys will in time grow to be intolerable, and it will become necessary to send them away to school, or to adopt some other plan for ridding the house of their turbulence, and relieving the poor mother's heart of the insupportable burden she has to bear in finding herself contemned and trampled on by her own children. In the earlier years of life the feeling entertained by the children for their mother in such a case is simply that of contempt; for the sentiment of gratitude which will modify it in time is very late to develop, and has not yet begun to act. In later years, however, when the boys have become young men, this sentiment of gratitude begins to come in, but it only changes the contempt into pity. And when years have passed away, and the mother is perhaps in her grave, her sons think of her with a mingled feeling excited by the conjoined remembrance of her helpless imbecility and her true maternal love, and say to each other, with a smile, "Poor dear mother! what a time she had of it trying to govern us boys!"

If a mother is willing to have her children thus regard her with contempt pure and simple while they are children, and with contempt transformed into pity by the infusion of a tardy sentiment of gratitude when they are grown, she may try the plan of endeavoring to secure their love by *indulging* them without *governing* them. But, if she sets her heart on being the object through life of their respectful love, she may indulge them as much as she pleases, but she *must govern* them.

A great deal is said about the evils of indulgence in the management of children; and, so far as the condemnation refers only to indulgence in what is injurious or evil, it is doubtless very just. But the harm is not in the indulgence itself,—that is, in the act of affording gratification to the child,—but

in the injurious or dangerous nature of the things indulged in. It seems to me that children are not generally indulged enough. They are thwarted and restrained in respect to the gratification of their harmless wishes a great deal too much. Indeed, as a general rule, the more that children are gratified in respect to their childish fancies and impulses, and even their caprices, when no evil or danger is to be apprehended, the better.

When, therefore, a child asks, "May I do this?" or "May I do that?" the question for the mother to consider is not whether the thing proposed is a wise or a foolish thing to do,—that is, whether it would be wise or foolish for her if she, with her ideas and feelings, were in the place of the child,—but only whether there is any harm or danger in it; and, if not, she should give her ready and cordial consent.

Children have no natural instinct of obedience to their parents, though they have other instincts, by means of which the habit of obedience, as an acquisition, can easily be formed.

They run to their mother by instinct when want, fear, or pain impels them. They require no teaching or training for this. But for them to come simply because their mother wishes them to come, to be controlled, in other words, by her will instead of by their own impulses, is a different thing altogether. They have no instinct for that: they have simply a *capacity for its development*.

It may be maintained that there is no real difference between instincts and capacities; and it is certainly possible that they may pass into each other by insensible gradations.

Still, practically, and in reference to our treatment of any intelligent nature which is in course of gradual development under our influence, the difference is wide. If we find a dog who evinces no disposition to seek the society of man, but roams off into woods and solitudes alone, he is useless, and we attribute the fault to his own wolfish nature; but if he will not fetch and carry at command, or bring home a basket in his mouth from market, the fault, if there be any fault, is in his master, in not having taken time and pains to train him, or in not knowing how to do it.

So with the child. If he does not seem to know how to take his food, or shows no

disposition to run to his mother when he is hurt or frightened, we have reason to suspect something wrong, or at least abnormal, in his mental or physical constitution. But, if he does not obey his mother's commands—no matter how insubordinate or unmanageable he may be,—the fault does not indicate anything at all wrong in *him*. The fault is in his training. In witnessing his disobedience, our reflection should be not, "What a bad boy!" but "What an unfaithful or incompetent mother!"

I have dwelt the longer on this point because it is fundamental. As long as the mother imagines—as so many mothers seem to do—that obedience on the part of the child is, or ought to be, a matter of course, she will never properly undertake the work of training him. But, when she thoroughly understands and feels that her children are not to be expected to submit their will to hers, *except so far as she forms in them the habit of doing this by special training*, the battle is half won.

She must understand this so fully as to feel that, if she finds that her children are disobedient to her commands,—leaving out of view cases of peculiar and extraordinary temptation,—it is *her* fault, not theirs. Perhaps I ought not to say her fault exactly,—for she may have done as well as she knew how,—but, at any rate, her failure. Instead, therefore, of being angry with them, or fretting and complaining about the trouble they give her, she should leave them, as it were, out of the case, and turn her thoughts to herself and to her own management, with a view to the discovery and the correcting of her own derelictions and errors. In a word, she must set regularly and systematically about the work of *teaching* her children to subject their will to hers.

I shall give three principles of management, or, rather, three different classes of measures, by means of which children may certainly be made obedient. The most perfect success will be attained by employing them all; but they require very different degrees of skill and tact on the part of the mother. The first requires very little skill. It demands only steadiness, calmness, and perseverance. The second draws much more on the mother's mental resources; and the last, most of all. Indeed, as will presently be seen, there is no limit to the amount of

tact and ingenuity, not to say genius, which may be advantageously exercised in the last method. The first is the most essential; and it will alone, if faithfully carried out, accomplish the end. The second, if the mother has the tact and skill to carry it into effect, will aid very much in accomplishing the result, and in a manner altogether more agreeable to both parties. The third will make the work of forming the habit of obedience on the part of the mother, and of acquiring it on the part of the child, a source of highest enjoyment to both. But then, unfortunately, it requires more skill and dexterity, more gentleness of touch, so to speak, and a more delicate constitution of soul than most mothers can be expected to possess.

CLASS IN AMERICAN HISTORY.

QUESTIONS FOR OCTOBER.

[Please send answers to Miss S. Minns, 14 Louisburg Square, by November 1, if possible. If not able to answer all the questions, send as many answers as you can.]

EARLY AMERICA.

1. How many nations lay claim to the early discovery of America?
2. What are the nations that make these traditional claims?
3. What three remains indicating an earlier civilization are found in New England?
4. What remains of past civilization are found in the West?
5. By what names do we describe the Prehistoric Americans?
6. What is meant by Prehistoric?
7. With what ancient civilizations were the Prehistoric races of the United States allied?
8. By what names do we describe these Prehistoric races now?
9. With what ancient civilization are the Zuñis or Pueblo Indians connected according to their traditions?
10. Who are meant by the North American Aborigines?
11. Are the North American tribes (of Indians) supposed to be of one origin?
12. Do any of their traditions point to a higher civilization in their past?

See any of the following books:—

"Leif Ericson," Justin Winsor; "Prophetic Voices concerning America," *Atlantic Monthly*, vol. 20; "Voyage of Northmen to America," E. F. Slafter; "Ancient America," Baldwin; "Prehistoric America," Marquis de Nadaillac; "American Antiquities and Discoveries," Josiah Priest; "Discovery and Spanish Occupation of America," John Fiske; "Mound-builders" (Bryce, Carr, or MacLean); "Traces of a Pre-Indian People," C. C. Abbott; "Land of the Pueblos," Susan E. Wallace; "Cliff-dwellers," Hardacre; "The Red Man and the White Man," G. E. Ellis; "North American Indians," Catlin; "Spanish and Portuguese America," Watson.

MISCELLANEOUS.

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